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An Act To Extend the Time Allowed for Outcome-based Forestry

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, this legislation seeks to extend the time during which the laws governing outcome-based forestry are in effect; and

Whereas, the laws governing outcome-based forestry are scheduled to be repealed July 1, 2007; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 12 MRSA §8003, sub-§3, ¶Q, as amended by PL 2005, c. 550, §2, is further amended to read:

Q. The director, in cooperation with public and private landowners, shall actively pursue creating experimental areas on public and private land where the principles and applicability of outcome-based forest policy, as defined in section 8868, can be applied and tested. No more than 6 such areas may be designated, ~~a single area may not exceed 100,000 acres and the total area under agreement may not exceed 200,000 acres. One area must be owned by a landowner holding fewer than 1,000 acres statewide.~~ The director shall seek to designate areas representing differing forest types and conditions and from different geographic regions of the State. The term of initial agreements may not exceed 5 years. This paragraph is repealed July 1, ~~2007~~2012.

Sec. 2. 12 MRSA §8868, sub-§2-B, as amended by PL 2005, c. 550, §3, is further amended to read:

2-B. Outcome-based forest policy. "Outcome-based forest policy" means a science-based, voluntary process to achieve agreed-upon economic, environmental and social outcomes in the State's forest, as an alternative to prescriptive regulation, demonstrating measurable progress towards achieving statewide sustainability goals and allowing landowners to use creativity and flexibility to achieve objectives, while providing for the conservation of public trust resources and the public values of forests. This subsection is repealed July 1, ~~2007~~2012.

Sec. 3. 12 MRSA §8869, sub-§3-A, as amended by PL 2005, c. 550, §4, is further amended to read:

3-A. Plans for experimental areas. Practices applied on an experimental area created pursuant to section 8003, subsection 3, paragraph Q must provide at least the equivalent forest and environmental protection as provided by existing rules and any applicable local regulations. At a minimum, tests of outcome-based principles must address:

- A. Soil productivity;
- B. Water quality, wetlands and riparian zones;
- C. Timber supply and quality;
- D. Aesthetic impacts of timber harvesting;
- E. Biological diversity; and
- F. Public accountability.

The Governor shall appoint a panel of technical experts to work with the director to implement, monitor and assess tests of outcome-based forestry principles. In order to participate in the outcome-based forestry experiment, the landowner, director and technical panel must develop agreed-upon desired outcomes for the experimental area and develop a method for determining if the outcomes have been attained and a system for reporting results to the public. This subsection is repealed July 1, ~~2007~~2012.

Sec. 4. 12 MRSA §8869, sub-§7-A, as amended by PL 2005, c. 550, §5, is further amended to read:

7-A. Exemption for outcome-based forest policy experimental areas. Outcome-based forest policy experimental areas designated under section 8003, subsection 3, paragraph Q are exempt from the requirements of this subchapter and rules adopted pursuant to this subchapter. This subsection is repealed July 1, ~~2007~~2012.

Sec. 5. 12 MRSA §8869, sub-§13, as amended by PL 2005, c. 550, §6, is further amended to read:

13. Confidential information. Information provided to the bureau voluntarily or to fulfill reporting requirements for the purposes of establishing and monitoring outcome-based forest policy experimental areas, as created pursuant to section 8003, subsection 3, paragraph Q, is designated as confidential for the purposes of Title 1, section 402, subsection 3, paragraph A if the bureau has determined that failure to designate the information as confidential would provide competitors an opportunity to obtain business or competitive advantage over the person to whom the information belongs or pertains or would result in loss or other significant detriment to that person. The bureau, working with the landowner and the panel of technical experts appointed under subsection 3-A, may publish reports as long as those reports do not reveal confidential information. This subsection is repealed July 1, ~~2007~~2012.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This bill extends the time during which the laws governing outcome-based forestry are in effect. These laws are scheduled to be repealed July 1, 2007. This bill delays the repeal date until July 1, 2012. It removes the acreage limitations on outcome-based forestry agreements.